

How to make change management for you

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Change management is a structured approach for ensuring that changes are thoroughly and smoothly implemented and that the lasting benefits of change are achieved. The focus is on the wider impacts of change, particularly on people and how they, as individuals and teams, move from the current situation to the new one. The change in question could range from a simple process change to major changes in policy or strategy needed if the organization is to achieve its potential. Change management is a structured approach for ensuring that changes are thoroughly and smoothly implemented and that the lasting benefits of change are achieved. The focus is on the wider impacts of change, particularly on people and how they, as individuals and teams, move from the current situation to the new one. The change in question could range from a simple process change to major changes in policy or strategy needed if the organization is to achieve its potential.

Theories about how organizations change draw on many disciplines, from psychology and behavioural science, through to engineering and systems thinking. The underlying principle is that change does not happen in isolation – it impacts the whole organization (system) around it, and all the people touched by it.

To manage change successfully, it is, therefore, necessary to attend to the wider impacts of the changes. As well as considering the tangible impacts of change, it's important to consider the personal impact on those affected, and their journey towards working and behaving in new ways to support the change.

Change management is, therefore, a very broad field, and approaches to managing change vary widely, from organization to organization and from project to project. Many organizations and consultants subscribe to formal change management methodologies. These provide toolkits, checklists, and outline plans of what needs to be done to manage changes successfully.

Change management begins from the top

Change can be a difficult process for people within the organization. In light of this, all employees are likely to depend on a push from the top structures within the organization for the change process to go well. Company leadership should, therefore, embrace the change process, to motivate the rest of the employees. They must be united and implement the expected behaviours themselves. A united structure is most likely to succeed. This is because they are aligned towards a common purpose, which is the success of the organization. It is therefore imperative to adopt a top-down strategy in your change management process in ensuring the success of the transition process.

Make a formal case for the change management process

Human beings may at times be slaves to conservatism. Once people utilize a method that seemingly works for them, they become reluctant to change. Individuals are innately rational and will question to what extent change is needed, whether the company is headed in the right direction, and whether they want to commit personally to making change happen. These are questions that will need to be answered and they will look to the leadership for answers. There is, therefore, a need to make the business case for why the change process is needed in your organization. This case must be articulate and it must leave your employees satisfied so that at the end of the day, they actively participate in the process. By following these 3 steps, you can be assured of making a convincing case to your employees:

- Confront reality and articulate a convincing need for change.
- Demonstrate faith that the company has a viable future and the leadership to get there.
- Provide a road map to guide behaviour and decision making.

Assess your organizational culture and address it where need be

Successful change programs pick up speed and intensity as they cascade down, making it critically important that leaders understand and account for culture and behaviors at each level of the organization. Companies often make the mistake of assessing culture either too late or not at all. Thorough cultural diagnostics can assess organizational readiness to change, bring major problems to the surface, identify conflicts, and define factors that can recognize and influence sources of leadership and resistance.

These diagnostics identify the core values, beliefs, behaviours, and perceptions that must be taken into account for successful change to occur. They serve as the common baseline for designing essential change elements, such as the new corporate vision, and building the infrastructure and programs needed to drive change. By assessing these and knowing fully well where the issues are, you will be able to implement a successful change management process.

Implement the change management process

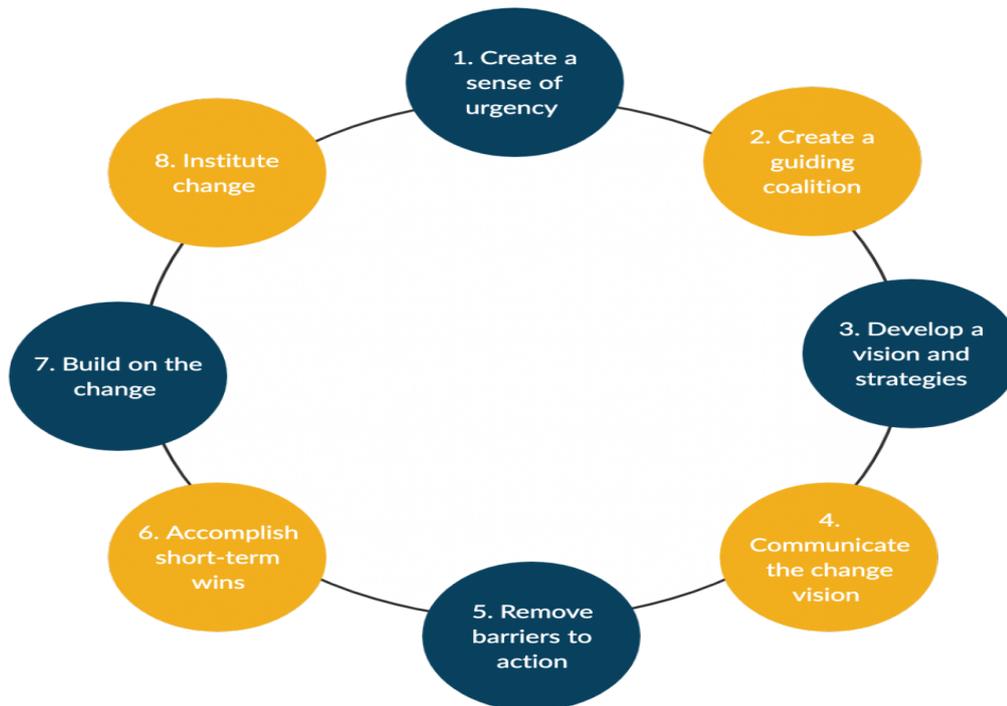


Figure 1: Kotter's Change Model of Change Management

Kotter's change management model is the most commonly used in the change management process. The steps outlined in this model, if followed will ensure a smooth process that will leave the organization aligned and ready to achieve its goals.

Common Challenges of Change Management

Due to ever-changing consumer expectations and the competition in the global economy, the science of organizational change is itself constantly changing and evolving. The human element of change management may be one of the most difficult to navigate because people do not like change or adjust to it well.

Most change methods agree that change is difficult and cumbersome. Therefore, involving people early on, implementing processes, and continuously adjusting for improvement is critical to success. This includes thorough planning, buy-in, process, resources, communication, and constant evaluation.

When you are tasked with managing change, irrespective of whether or not you subscribe to a particular change management approach, the first question to consider is what change management means in your situation. Change management focuses on people and is about ensuring change is thoroughly, smoothly and lastingly implemented. And to know what that means exactly in your situation, you must dig down further to define your specific change management objectives.

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